

THE FARMER'S ADVOCATE AND HOME MAGAZINE.

THE LEADING AGRICULTURAL JOURNAL IN THE
DOMINION.

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1. THE FARMER'S ADVOCATE AND HOME MAGAZINE is published every Thursday.
It is impartial and independent of all cliques or parties, handsomely illustrated with original engravings, and furnishes the most practical, reliable and profitable information for farmers, dairymen, gardeners, stockmen and home-makers, of any publication in Canada.
2. TERMS OF SUBSCRIPTION.—In Canada, England, Ireland and Scotland, \$1.50 per year, in advance; \$2.00 per year when not paid in advance. United States, \$2.50 per year; all other countries 1.25; in advance.
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AGENTS AND AGENTS!

The following paragraph is quoted from a letter written by a leading Canadian cream-separator firm:

"The writer is much surprised to note on your editorial page, in your issue of August 20th, under the heading of 'The Seductive Agent,' an article which, to say the least, might have been worded in such a manner as to differentiate between selling organizations which require the services of travelling representatives and local agents, and those organizations, which you perhaps refer to, that operate to-day and are gone to-morrow, leaving in their wake a trail of credulous and captured victims, who, though sorry at the moment after discovering their position, forget it in time to take hold of the next unknown but good-sounding proposition that is handed to them. The word 'Agent,' as you have used it, covers everything in the way of a traveller, who, for business reasons, may have to approach the farmer rather than the farmer having to approach him. There are in every legitimate business concern, dealing with the farmer, agents who are employed to come in contact with him in the course of business. The writer thoroughly believes that your editor had in mind the concerns as above mentioned, who make a practice of scalping the business, to the great detriment of established concerns, as well as to farmers, but on general principles we submit that the matter wants to be stated in a little plainer terms."

The writer of this letter correctly interprets the main point of the editorial to which he refers. As specified at the outset, it was the "peripatetic agent and salesman" to whom our strictures were applied—that is to say, the here-to-day-and-gone-to-morrow class.

* * *

We must acknowledge, perhaps, a degree of ambiguity in bringing in, towards the close, a secondary thought, to the effect that it will be a

good thing when travelling agents of any kind will no longer be required. This is no reflection whatever upon those firms who now find the established agency a business necessity. Such selling organization is necessary to-day in order to introduce new lines, as well as to meet the competition of rival firms, and it will be necessary until all firms consent to withdraw their agents, until profits are so far contracted that the margin between cost and selling price will not admit of the expense of an aggressive selling force, or until prospective customers become convinced that the best place to buy goods is in the stores where makes can be deliberately compared. If such a way of doing business were to become the rule, it would redound to the especial advantages of those firms handling the most deserving goods, for at present not only do they have to maintain an expensive selling force, but even then their sales are cut into to some extent by manufacturers of inferior makes whose chief selling factor is a glib-tongued agent.

Of course, it must be admitted that the travelling agent and salesman has been a powerful incentive to commercial, industrial, and even social progress, by disseminating new ideas, new goods, and improved appliances adapted to labor-saving methods. In this way the farmer's conservatism has often been overcome to his own great advantage, though sometimes also to his disadvantage. Take, for example, the cream separator. While this is one of the most commendable inventions ever introduced into the farmer's home, we are all aware that through anxiety to make sales, local agents have often assured their customers that washing once a day was sufficient, thereby sowing a generous crop of trouble for the creamerymen, for every well-informed dairyman knows that a separator should be washed thoroughly after every using. Furthermore, as stated above, the agency method of selling has been responsible for the purchase of not a few separators of inferior makes, and the same is true of most other lines of goods. Besides many a serviceable implement has been discarded through an agent's influence, and a new one purchased on credit.

Thus we see that while no possible blame attaches to the reputable firm which to-day finds the agency method necessary to introduce new goods or to meet competition, and while such methods of selling have proven a direct incentive to commercial activity, still the advice to farmers to disregard the blandishments of agents, and to insist on purchasing for cash in the store, after deliberate comparison with other makes, is sensible and sound. Were the generality of farmers to do this, manufacturers would no longer require to maintain such expensive selling agencies to drum up the farmer in order to induce him to buy things he obviously needs. Agents will be needed however, until customers are enterprising enough to buy without coaxing such things as they require and are discreet enough to purchase, if possible, at bottom cash price, after careful inspection and comparison of makes.

AN IDEAL BUSINESS TRANSACTION.

Our ideal of a farmer's business transaction would be according to the following pattern: Supposing Mr. A., a wide-awake farmer, concludes, after due consideration, to buy a binder, why should he not go to town, visit the resident agents in turn, and accost each company's representative in this way: "I intend to buy a binder and would like to examine a ——. I'm going to compare the latest models of every make thoroughly. I'll not occupy very much of your time and there will be no use in your coming out to the farm, for I propose to make up my own mind what I want and buy for cash. Now what is your best cash price on this machine?" No time lost in dickering or in running back and forth, with a probable trip from the general agent—no uncertain credit or risk—simply a neat, business-like operation, advantageous alike to both buyer and seller. From the way some farmers parley and dicker about purchasing an implement, one would conclude their vanity was gratified by the attention of the urbane salesman, never considering that they are paying his salary in the price of the machine. The agent is not to blame, the firm who employs him is in no way culpable.

The farmer himself elects to pay for the whistle by courting, or, at least, permitting their expensive attentions, for if one agent does not dance attendance on him, another who does will make the sale. But the whole system is expensive, nevertheless, and it is well to realize who pays the salesman's salary and travelling expenses in the end.

HIRING GOOD MEN BY THE YEAR.

Two rays of hope for the solution of the labor problem are gleaned from the August report of the Ontario Crop Bulletin, issued by the Provincial Department of Agriculture. After noting that first-class farm hands are seemingly as scarce as ever, and mentioning that \$1.25 to \$1.50 per day, with board, were the ruling harvest wages, monthly rates varying from \$15 to \$35, according to experience, the report states the very encouraging bit of news that more tried men are being hired by the year, with house provided, although improved machinery is rendering farmers more independent of hired help. The rays of hope are the use of improved machinery, and the disposition to hire good men by the year. Summer employment only will never keep a man with any gumption on the farm, or anywhere else.

OUR MARITIME LETTER.

NEW BRUNSWICK AGRICULTURE.

Without any doubt, the new Government of the Province of New Brunswick has taken the only course open to it, in all sincerity, in appointing a commission to look into the whole agricultural situation, as coming within the province of its official solicitude. There has long been need for some such action. A Province blessed with much good soil, and convenient to the best markets that could stimulate healthy and sufficient production, it was wonderful how little of the former was really planted to crops, and how unorganized and ineffective the latter seemed to be in creating that healthy and hearty emulation which alone can secure the best that is in human endeavor. Money in plenty was versed into narrow channels out of the public chest. It was felt that, with some trivial exceptions, the fruits of the field and orchard were altogether incommensurate with the possibilities awaiting the magic touch of effective organization. The official encouragement scarcely exceeded enervating routine.

Often change, which, in the abstract, predicates imperfection, brings about, in the designs of Providence, operating through human channels, substantial good. Regimes of all kinds deteriorate. It is the saddest thing in life to see the public functionary holding on tenaciously to office after his usefulness has forever departed. Even those who are good outlive the period of effectiveness. Humanity likes variety in its service. We tire of everything under the sun—tire, even, as Greece tired of the renown of Socrates. At any rate, a change is not disagreeable at well-removed and fixed periods.

Such a period seems to have dawned in New Brunswick. She has come to the conclusion that not all that was contained in the agricultural problem—not half of it, indeed—was being vouchsafed her, and consequently her leaders were not up to the standard of leaders which know all the vantage grounds of the present and have an eager eye on every green spot which appears in the fields of the future. The old leaders—political suffered as a consequence, and new men were called to fill their places. The new men proceeded prudently. They felt the necessity of accurate diagnosis of the case before remedy was proposed; they perhaps wisely mistrusted their own ability for off-hand pronouncement; they called in a jury of experts, and proceeded to make such a thorough examination as would leave nothing hidden from view. In the common language of legislators, they appointed a commission—an agricultural commission (we see too few of them)—and this trio set promptly to work. Little concern to us their names or other qualifications for office. They have the work of reorganizing New Brunswick agriculture in hand, and by their fruits, as seen on this present tree of knowledge, we will know them. It is significant that they are touring the country—the agricultural areas, at least—and will give evidence as to the actual state of affairs in it. We shall know just how much agricultural effort New Brunswick is putting forth, at least; we shall know what sort of effort it is, and it is to be hoped we shall know what may be suggested for the betterment of things, if present methods and conditions are entirely reprobated. It is significant that President Roosevelt and Premier Hazen are in a like frame of mind regarding the agricultural uplift, and have each appointed a commission of men to find the ways and means in their respective jurisdictions.

A. E. BURKE.